Answered Aug 11. 1847.

Honolulu, Sand. Islands.
Dec. 16. 1846.

To the Society of Inquiry
on missions, Princeton Theo. Sem.

Very dear Brethren;

With great pleasure I acknowledge the receipt of a letter, written by E. W. Forman on behalf of your Society, bearing date Dec. 25. 1845. It is very gratifying to me to receive such letters from those who occupy the very seats, & rooms which I once occupied, and around which cluster ten thousand tender associations. Until you are some fifteen years in a foreign land, worn out with toil & care, you will not know the pleasure of hearing from those institutions of our native land, which are endeared by so many sacred ties. But above all it rejoices my heart to know that the subject of foreign missions is one which engages your serious attention, and that the "Society of Inquiry" on that great subject is still alive and flourishing. May the glory of the Lord ever rest upon it; may his Spirit pervade & illuminate it, and may every member of it, be guided by that Spirit to post the stop on earth where the Master would have him labour.

You ask for information, council, or any thing that will aid the objects of your Society. Would that I could stand in your midst for an hour or two & pour out my heart before you in the cause of

writing you a few imperfect lines. For so many topics suggest themselves to my mind that I know not where to begin, much less where to stop.

As to the state of things at the islands a few items may interest you.

The State of religion in our churches. We have had but few revivals for eight years past, and those few have been feeble: and yet there is nothing particularly discouraging in the present state of our churches. You are aware that these are large; thousands having been admitted during the unparalleled excitement in '37, & '38. In my humble opinion too many by one half or more, were at that time received to the fellowship of our several churches, particularly at some of the stations. The consequence has been something of a reaction; a falling away both in number & the standard of duty and discipline. And yet not so much as was feared by many of the friends of Zion. On the whole I think our churches generally would not suffer in comparison with most evangelical churches in the U. States, at any rate as they used to be.

In attendance at the house of God on the Sabbath, holding regular family worship, reading the Scriptures, and other religious books, in giving of their substance to support & propagate the Gospel, build meeting houses &c, we find much to try our patience, but not more perhaps than pastors do in N. Jersey. In some respects however, our christians here are far inferior to those of civilized

lands. They lack that consistency of character which is the results of early training in civilized as well as Christian habits. You cannot get a more correct idea of our Hawaiian Christians, than by reading the five books of Moses & studying the character of the good men of that primitive age. See Cain worshiping God & then murdering his brother! See Abraham, the father of the faithful, the friend of God, the greatest of all the Patriarchs, capable of the most sublime moral actions & yet in a moment of temptation falling into prevarication! See Aaron trembling and rejoicing in view of the majesty of God & then turning to worship a calf! What a strange & to us unaccountable mixture of good & evil do we see in these men, and yet they were good men. Even Cain. Verily, we see much of this in our Hawaiian Christians; in fact, there are many parts of the Bible, especially the old Testament, that no body understands so well as the missionary among the heathen. Ministers with you balk at even certain indelicate words in the Bible, but there is no necessity for that here; there is no blushing among our most delicate females at the very hardest of these words. You would think it strange in N. Jersey to hear Ministers preaching whole sermons on lying, fraud, fornication, adultery, theft, and the like, but here we are constantly dwelling on such topics. The character of our audiences demand it, as did some of the churches in the days of the Apostle. Our discipline too as a con-

sequence differs from that in your churches. It must be much more prompt, direct and rigid, or we should have no standard of piety at all.

When a member is overtaken in a fault he is at once called before the Session (I govern on the Presbyterian plan) and dealt with as the case may be, suspended, or excommunicated, or his confession is accepted. But we do not give him up though the fault may be a gross one. Yesterday a member of my church in whom I have had much confidence was caught in the act of adultery, & then to make the matter worse he denied the charge most positively though the evidence against him was overwhelming. This is a fair specimen of what often happens with us. Yet I shall hope to see this same man give good evidence of repentence, for his life has been such as to warrant the hope that the "root of the matter is in him".

One of my Elders & an excellent man too, had an impenitent wife; he felt concerned for her; exhorted her to pray in secret which she did for a season, but left it off. One morning at breakfast he talked with her on the subject, & she

made him no answer, so he up & hit in her face! So much for Hawaiian zeal without discretion.

I heard a native and I hope a good man too once attempt in a public meeting to prove the existance of a God; & he drew his whole argument from the manner in which children are begotten & brought into the world! He went through the whole process in detail & you have but one woman blush in the whole assembly of several hundreds.

I mention these things to show you what sort of a people we have to do with & what is the character of Hawaiian christians.

One great object we have long aimed at and that is to build up the family relation. But it is an arduous & difficult work among such a people. Parents have no control over their children; have no skill in government and hence all is confusion & disorder in the family. Indeed we see nothing yet except in a few rare cases, that looks like a well ordered family. Here is a great & lamentable source of evil & it will require a long time to remedy it. Family feuds are common, & violent; children are disobedient; there is little economy or frugality, or industry of course. Poverty follows, & this leads to theft, or dishonest means of getting a subsistance. I speak now of the general state of things; for many families have

made commendable advances in civiliza
tion; live in clean & good houses, have re
-gular hours for eating & sleeping & working.
They have good furniture also, can set a decent
table, & can entertain a civilized stranger
very pleasantly.

One great desideratum is the proper training
of the females; our Seminary does but a frac
tion of what is called for in this respect. We shall
have better christians when we have better
mothers.

Romanism. There are now about 22 priest
& laymen at work propagating that heresy on
the islands and a reinforcement of Jesuit mer
chants is daily expected here. Their object is
said to be, to make converts by selling goods
at cost prices to such as favor their cause.
They are well manned & it is reported that they
have a capital of half a million for this object
& are to have several trading establishments
in the Pacific. Well, let them come. He that
sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them:
the Lord will hold them in derision. The
success of the Papists on the islands is not
great, tho. they number 14,000 converts: these
are mostly from among those who have never
been much under the influence of the
Gospel or received any instruction.

The priests are here great advocates for educa
tion; have schools &c, while on the coast of

I have just called in Honolulu on Mr. Bishop

California where they have had missions for ages they have neither books nor schools! This seems odd; but it is easily explained. They would have no books or schools here did not the State of public opinion require it. Neither would they in N. York.

Formerly while there was a prospect that the islands might fall into the hands of France, the priests made all the difficulty they could with the government; now, that hope has vanished, they are the humble servants of the meanest officer in the service of the King. One thing I can say from observation, & that is that popery has no connection with virtue. The most atrocious villain may be a very good Catholic now as well as in the middle ages.

Intemperance. Of this we have but little among natives; among foreigners it is still too much prevalent, although there being a duty of $5 per gal. on rum, it comes very high. I hope to see the day when its introduction will be prohibited altogether.

Commerce. During 1846 not less than 600 ships have visited the islands, bringing to our shores not less than 25.000 seamen. This is exerting a powerful influence on the Hawaiian race, & I wish I could say it a good influence. We meet among this motley crowd, a great many

intelligent & worthy persons from all parts of the world, but on the contrary the conduct of seamen is generally against the cause of religion & morality. In one respect, it is indiscribably bad, and that is the licentious intercourse between foreigners & natives; both are injured for time & eternity. The amount of both some desease now prevalent is truly deplorable. A physician told me a day or two since that 7/8 of the seamen who left here had the bad disorder. The same desease is consuming multitudes of natives. The authorities do what they can to check this vice but the government is feeble & has been tend against a most formidable opposition in the foreign community.

Education. Public instruction is now a regular branch of the government, with Mr. Richards at it's head. Schools are supported from the govt. treasury, but missionaries both Protestant & Papist have in conjunction with the native school agents, the immediate management of the schools. The government being bound by treaty, is obliged to put the Romish sect on the same footing with the Protestant. The prospect of the cause of education are now favorable, if the Lord

sends prosperity, the rising race will be wiser than their fathers.

Were I to make any suggestions to the theme in the Seminary, they would be briefly the following.

1. Let every one deeply & solemnly consider his own personal duty in regard to the heathen. Let no hasty conclusion be formed; let time & sober reflection dissipate all romantic feeling, ~~until~~ and the character of the foreign missionary work be studied thoroughly. Great mischief has resulted from rash & hasty conduct in regard to this work.

2. If any have decided to go to the heathen, let them not be hasty to get through their education, but lay up a large store of knowledge, mental culture, and christian experience; let them be as much as possible mature men, full grown men. Above all, let them cultivate acquaintance with themselves, lest they find out when it is too late, as alas! too many have done, that they have mistaken their calling. Few persons are more miserable than missionaries who go abroad & after a few years find out that they have wandered from their place like a bird that has wondered from its nest. Let those who expect to go abroad, cultivate humility, patience, amiable temper, cheerfulness, an entire yielding frame of mind, equanimity, habits of industry, perseverance & carefulness. Let them seek elevation of character & aim, to as not to be worried & perplexed about trifles or appalled by obstacles.

3. If any one of a fickle disposition, gloomy in temperament, subject to depression of mind? If any one possessed of a jealous temper, or rash & inconsiderate, or given to excessive levity and foolish talking, let him not think of a foreign field. For there is no place like missionary ground to bring out all the evil that is in a mans nature. Experience proves this, tho. the world knows as yet but little of this experience. It is painful experience, if my own case is a fair specimen. Anxious as I am for the enlargement of the foreign corps, I am still more anxious that the character of foreign missionaries should be elevated & improved. When a person manifestly unsuitable for the foreign service, thinks of offering himself to any of our Boards, the case ought to be managed with as much delicacy as possible, & yet decisive measures taken to prevent the individual going. A regard for the welfare of the missionary cause, the glory of the Redeemer, the funds of the church, & for his own welfare require it. If the professor are ignorant of his real character let his brethren who know him better be faithful. An experience of fifteen years leads me to say thus much on this topic & I would say more if I had time and room.)

The longer I labour in the missionary service, the more deeply am I impressed with the difficultly, greatness, and excellence of the work, and its claim upon the very best powers

and daughters of the church. I sincerely believe that there is no happier man than the foreign missionary who is well adapted for the office and has his whole heart in the work. There is something in its very nature that is elevating & ennobling; there is nothing in it that gratifies the "old man", but every thing to developpe the new man; I mean when engaged in with a proper Spirit. All that is gained is clear gain, not for self but for Christ; and even if nothing directly is gained, there is a sweet sustaining consciousness of having done what we could.

Dear young brethren, while then I would advice you to proceed cautiously, I would still beckon you on to the foreign field. It matters but little, much less than you are aware of, to what part of the heathen world you go, provided you are called of God & filled with his Spirit. Fear not the dangers by the way, on the deep, in hospitable climes, or an early grave; your happiness & crown will not depend upon these except in a slight degree.

I rejoice in what the Presbyterian church is doing for the heathen; but she is capable of doing much more & it will be to her glory to do it — her shame if she does not. What that beloved church will do in future years, will depend no doubt in some degree under God, on those who may read this letter. I how important them, that you

have just the right view of this subject and do your whole duty in reference to it.

There are several graduates from Princeton at the islands and we all rejoice in the honor & prosperity of our Alma Mater.

I have written this letter in haste, having many other letters to write before the "Charles" shall sail & take this to your shores, & I have not time to copy it. Please accept of it for what it is worth with all its imperfections.

My kindest regards to those dear and venerable men who have so long & so faithfully served that institution, but who according to the course of nature must soon give place to others. May their last days be their best.

Brethren pray for us without ceasing; pray for this nation; pray for the coming of the latter day glory. God bless you.

Please let me hear from you again.

Your affectionate brother

R. Armstrong.